UNITED NATIONS

EP

Governing Council of the United Nations Environment Programme

Distr.
GENERAL

UNEP/HLC/2/6
6 March 1998

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

HIGH-LEVEL COMMITTEE OF
MINISTERS AND OFFICIALS
Second meeting
Nairobi, 2-4 March 1998

REPORT OF THE HIGH-LEVEL COMMITTEE OF MINISTERS AND OFFICIALS ON THE WORK OF ITS SECOND MEETING

INTRODUCTION

1. The second meeting of the High-level Committee of Ministers and Officials, established by the Governing Council of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) in its decision 19/32 of 4 April 1997, was held at the headquarters of the United Nations Environment Programme from 2 to 4 March 1998.

I. OPENING OF THE MEETING

2. The meeting was opened by the Chair of the High-level Committee of Ministers and Officials, Mr. Simon Khaya Moyo (Zimbabwe) at 2.30 p.m. on Monday, 2 March 1998.

3. In his opening statement, Mr. Moyo congratulated the Executive Director on his well deserved election as head of UNEP and assured him of the full support of the Committee and of its members' respective Governments in his work. Recalling that the current meeting was the first substantive meeting of the High-level Committee of Ministers and Officials, since its meeting in New York had been essentially organizational, and drawing attention to the full agenda before the Committee, he urged representatives to proceed in as effective a manner as possible so as to ensure that the Committee's voice on the international agenda on environment was clear and unequivocal.

4. In conclusion, he stressed that the meeting should send out positive signals on the challenges facing UNEP and demonstrate its committed support to the Executive Director in implementing UNEP's programme.

5. In his address to the meeting, Mr. Klaus Töpfer, the Executive Director of UNEP, assured members of the importance he attached to the current meeting. The world looked to UNEP to address the pressing environmental issues of the modern age and it was the task of UNEP to develop an early warning capacity and to catalyse action within the United Nations system and beyond. Taking as his leitmotif "Continuity and Change", it was his aim to bring the concept of sustainable development back to the centre of the international policy agenda, from which it had been displaced by regional conflicts and distortions in the economy and financial markets. To that end, UNEP must play its role in the ongoing negotiations on trade and environment, in bringing emerging environmental issues to the attention of the world community and securing agreements on innovative legally binding instruments.

6. In particular, he suggested that UNEP might work towards a regionalized global programme of action on water, along the lines of the Global Programme of Action on Land-based Sources of Marine Pollution. In addition, it should play a strengthened role in identifying and using synergies between the different environmental conventions and protocols and should enhance its activities in the area of cleaner production. UNEP must become an agent for change that stimulated, complemented and accelerated action.

7. To achieve those ends, UNEP required resources. The Nairobi Declaration on the Role and Mandate of the United Nations Environment Programme recognized that a revitalized UNEP needed adequate, stable and predictable financial resources: he would also add the word "growing" to that list. Thanking Governments which had already paid their contributions, he called on others to pay in full and as early as possible, thus sending a vital psychological signal. He hoped, furthermore, to be able to use his advantageous appointment as head both of UNEP and of the United Nations Office at Nairobi to reduce administrative costs and avoid duplications in administration. The success of that endeavour, however, depended on an efficient and modern communications system and he therefore hoped that agreement in that area could be reached with the Kenyan Government in the context of the current meeting.

8. Speaking on behalf of the President, Government and people of Kenya, Mr. Francis Nyenze, Minister of Environmental Conservation of Kenya, welcomed participants to Nairobi and congratulated the Executive Director on his appointment. He assured the Executive Director of Kenya's full commitment, including every assistance in his endeavours to stabilize and strengthen not only UNEP, but also the entire United Nations presence in Kenya. He further assured the meeting that his Government had taken steps to ensure that the Mercure process would shortly come to its long-awaited but fruitful conclusion.

II. ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA AND ORGANIZATION OF THE WORK OF THE MEETING

A. Attendance

9. The meeting was attended by the following 35 members of the Committee who had been nominated by their respective regional groups in accordance with

the procedure agreed on by the Governing Council at its nineteenth session 1/: Algeria, Argentina, Australia, Austria, Bahamas, Bangladesh, Burundi, China, Cuba Czech Republic, Democratic Republic of Congo, Denmark, Egypt, Indonesia, Islamic Republic of Iran, Italy, Japan, Kenya, Mexico, Netherlands, Nigeria, Pakistan, Peru, Philippines, Poland, Republic of Korea, Romania, Russian Federation, Senegal, Switzerland, Uganda, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America, Zambia, Zimbabwe.

10. The following State members of the United Nations or members of a specialized agency or of the International Atomic Energy Agency were represented by observers: Belgium, Benin, Brazil, Canada, Chile, Columbia, Costa Rica, Cyprus, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Finland, France, Germany, Ghana, Greece, Holy See, Hungary, India, Israel, Madagascar, Malawi, Mali, Morocco, Mozambique, New Zealand, Norway, Oman, Portugal, Saudi Arabia, Slovak Republic, South Africa, Spain, Sri Lanka, Swaziland, Sweden, Thailand, Tunisia, Turkey, United Republic of Tanzania, Venezuela, Viet Nam, Yemen.

11. The European Community was also represented.

12. The President of the Governing Council, Mr. Arnoldo José Gabaldón (Venezuela) attended the meeting, pursuant to paragraph 2 of Governing Council decision 19/32.

13. The Chairman of the Committee of Permanent Representatives to the United Nations Environment Programme, Dr. Alex Kamugisha, also attended the meeting, in accordance with paragraph 2 of Governing Council decision 19/32.

14. The following United Nations bodies and specialized agencies were represented: Department of Economic and Social Affairs, United Nations Population Fund, International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO), United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO), World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO), World Meteorological Organization (WMO).

15. The following intergovernmental organizations were represented: African Development Bank (AfDB), Organization of African Unity (OAU).

16. In addition, the following non-governmental organizations were represented: EarthCare, Environment Liaison Centre International (ELCI), Global Crop Protection Federation, World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts, World Conservation Union (IUCN).

17. The full list of participants is contained in document UNEP/HLC/2/INF/8.

1/ In keeping with paragraph (c) of the decision on the constitution of the High-level Committee of Ministers and Officials established pursuant to decision 19/32 adopted by the Governing Council at its nineteenth session, the nominated Governments "will be empowered to function on a provisional basis as members of the High-level Committee of Ministers and Officials until the next special session or regular session of the Governing Council, whichever occurs earlier, where the nominations will be formally confirmed by the Council as elected".

B. Officers

18. The representative of Poland informed the meeting that the Bureau member representing the group of Eastern European countries was Mr. Janusz Radziejowski, Vice-Minister of Environmental Protection, National Resources and Forestry of Poland. The Chair further informed the meeting that Mr. Philippe Roch (Switzerland) had assumed the office of Rapporteur.

19. The Bureau was thus constituted as follows:

Chair:	Mr. Simon Khaya Moyo (Zimbabwe)
Vice-Chairs:	Ms. Maria Julia Alsogaray (Argentina) Mr. Xia Kunbao (China) Mr. Janusz Radziejowski (Poland)
Rapporteur:	Mr. Philippe Roch (Switzerland)

C. Adoption of the agenda

20. Following observations by several representatives, who believed that the agenda items as ordered in the provisional agenda contained in document UNEP/HLC/2/1 did not accurately reflect the relative priority that should be accorded to the various items and that the heading of certain agenda items should be improved, the Chair proposed the reordering of the items. One representative, speaking on behalf of a regional economic integration organization, felt that the issue of freshwater, as the only substantive issue of the agenda, should not be downgraded. Another representative said that he was prepared to go along with the Chair's proposal, provided that adequate time would be made available for a full discussion of that item.

21. The Chair assured the meeting that, as all items in the agenda were important, he would endeavour to assure that adequate time was given to their discussion.

22. Following those assurances, the meeting adopted the following revised agenda, as subsequently circulated in document UNEP/HLC/2/L.1:

1. Opening of the meeting.

2. Adoption of the agenda and organization of the work of the meeting.

3. Status of the trust funds in support of the work of the High-level Committee.

4. Adequate, growing and predictable funding of UNEP, and progress report on the Mercure telecommunication system.

5. UNEP reform and revitalization in the context of United Nations reform.

6. Freshwater.

7. Rules of procedure of the High-level Committee of Ministers and Officials.

8. Other matters.

9. Closure of the meeting.

23. One representative suggested that representatives should only speak on behalf of the regional groups accepted for the organization of the Committee's work and that it would be inappropriate for them to speak on behalf of other groups of countries.

24. Some representatives expressed the hope that future meetings of the Committee would see a greater number of substantive, environmental issues on the agenda.

D. Organization of work

25. At the first session of the meeting, the Committee decided that the meeting would be conducted in plenary session only.

26. Following the conclusion of the debate on agenda items 3, 4, 5, 6 and 7, the Committee decided, at its third session, that a small working group with balanced regional representation should meet under the chairmanship of the Rapporteur. Mr. Philippe Roch (Switzerland), to draft conclusions on those items for the consideration of the Committee.

E. Documentation

27. The documentation before the High-level Committee of Ministers and Officials at its second meeting is listed in annex II below.

III. STATUS OF THE TRUST FUNDS IN SUPPORT OF THE WORK OF THE HIGH-LEVEL COMMITTEE OF MINISTERS AND OFFICIALS

28. Introducing agenda item 3 at the first session of the meeting, the Executive Director reported on the status of the two trust funds, one general and one technical, that had been established in support of the work of the High-level Committee. He said that the Technical Trust Fund, which consisted of a contribution by the United States of America to cover the costs of at least one of the meetings of the High-level Committee of Ministers and Officials in 1997-1998, had received $300,000 from that Government in 1997. With expenditures of $93,218 in 1997 and the deduction of the 13 per cent trust fund support cost, there remained $172,269 for activities in 1998. With regard to the General Trust Fund, which had been established to provide financial assistance to facilitate the participation in the work of the High-level Committee of developing countries and, in particular, the least developed among them, he said that $33,040 had been received from the United Kingdom and $7,308 from Australia in 1997. The Australian contribution was limited to use for travel from its region. A further $6,897 had been

pledged, but not paid, by Switzerland. Of that total of $47,245, $13,000 had been spent for participant's travel in 1997, which, with the deduction of the 13 per cent trust fund support cost, meant that $28,810 remained for activities in 1998.

29. Following the statement of the Executive Director, the representative of Argentina announced that her country would contribute $5,000 to the General Trust Fund for 1998. The Executive Director expressed his gratitude to those countries that had paid into the funds and the hope that such a trend would continue in the future.

30. At the fourth session of the meeting, on 4 March, the Committee adopted its conclusions under this item on the basis of a draft (UNEP/HLC/2/L.2) prepared by the small working group established under the chairmanship of the Rapporteur (see para. 27 above). The conclusions as adopted by the Committee are contained in paragraph 1 of annex I below.

IV. ADEQUATE, GROWING AND PREDICTABLE FUNDING OF UNEP, AND PROGRESS REPORT ON THE MERCURE TELECOMMUNICATION SYSTEM

31. Introducing agenda item 4 at the first session of the meeting, the Executive Director said that the issue of adequate, growing and predictable funding for UNEP had both a long-term and short-term dimension: the former being to stabilize the future financial situation of the Programme and the latter being to ensure that UNEP had the necessary resources to discharge its responsibilities in the current, 1998-1999 biennium. The secretariat had prepared two documents on the subject, analysing the difficulties and presenting possible alternatives to the current system of purely voluntary contributions to the Environment Fund. These included the possibility of assessed contributions, which some Governments supported but others opposed, and the possibility of having agreed contributions to cover the core programme and voluntary contributions for other activities.

32. The current situation was that there was a clear shortfall in contributions as compared to the agreed level of contributions necessary to implement the UNEP programme of work. A significant increase in contributions would be needed if UNEP was to discharge the mandate given it by the Governing Council. If contributions did not rise by at least some 20 per cent, significant parts of the agreed programme of work would not be implemented. He earnestly hoped that Governments would increase their funding to the programme and thus give UNEP a chance to prove itself. He also pointed to the losses incurred by UNEP as a result of fluctuating exchange rates, due to the strengthening of the United States dollar as most countries paid their contributions in national currency. The decision to minimize the carry-over from one biennium to the next had also meant that the organization had insufficient cash-in-hand to start the programme of work at the beginning of the biennium. He did, however, express his gratitude to those countries that had paid early in the current biennium and encouraged others to do likewise.

33. In addition, there was a growing trend toward the earmarking by Governments of contributions to be used for specific activities. Dr. Töpfer also noted the regional imbalance in contributions, with UNEP reliant on only

three regions of the world for the vast bulk of its funding. Nevertheless, it was encouraging to see that previous non-contributors to the Environment Fund were now contributing and that some countries had restarted contributing after a period of non-payment.

34. Finally, the Executive Director said that he would be reviewing the functions of the United Nations Office at Nairobi (UNON) with a view to ensuring that its cost was matched by effectiveness. In his capacity as Director-General of the United Nations Office at Nairobi and Head of the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (Habitat), he also drew attention to General Assembly resolution 52/220, which requested financing arrangements for UNON should be brought in line with those existing for similar United Nations administrative offices in Geneva and Vienna.

35. In the ensuing discussion, wide support was expressed for the role of UNEP as the environmental voice of the United Nations and for the Executive Director's efforts to put it on a more stable financial footing, many representatives pointing to the threat to the global environment posed by the financial difficulties facing the organization, which might prevent it from fulfilling its mandate.

36. Several representatives stated that the financial problems of UNEP, as well as the growth in earmarked contributions, were the result of a lack of confidence in the ability of UNEP to deliver a programme effectively. Those representatives therefore supported the continued efforts of the Executive Director to streamline the organization: with improved management and performance, contributions to the Environment Fund would increase. One representative said a system of two-year pledges would enforce the link between performance and contributions.

37. A number of representatives pointed to difficulties caused by the decline in contributions to the United Nations Environment Programme from the regular budget and the fact that the Environment Fund bore the brunt of the funding of the United Nations Office at Nairobi (UNON). One representative, speaking on behalf of the member States of a regional economic integration organization, cautioned, however, that there was no spare capacity in the regular budget to assume new and additional costs. He looked forward with interest to any proposals that the Secretary-General might make on the matter when he had concluded his review of that area of United Nations funding.

38. Several representatives said that there were several interesting options in the background documentation before the Committee, some stating that no option should be ruled out a priori and that there might be other possibilities that could be explored. A number of representatives opposed the idea of assessed contributions or negotiated pledges as a solution to the problems facing UNEP. Some of those representatives said that the introduction of a system of assessed contributions would run counter to the principle of the common but differentiated responsibility of the developed and developing countries. A number of representatives called for broader donor base for contributions to the Environment Fund, one of them stating that it was not a sound situation when 90 per cent of the budget was funded by some 15-20 countries.

39. With regard to predictability in funding, one representative, speaking on behalf of the member States of a regional economic integration organization, said that pledging sessions at meetings of the Governing Council should be as closely linked as possible to decisions on the Environment Fund budget, which, in turn, should be realistically based on total pledges made. Stress was also laid on the need for pledges to be honoured and paid in a timely manner.

40. A number of representatives supported the exploration of new and innovative sources of funding, such as funding from the private sector and NGOs. One representative called for a strengthening of the fund-raising capacity of the organization.

41. It was also noted that UNEP's financial difficulties could not be seen in isolation from the overall financial situation facing the United Nations. Some delegations noted that the difficulties were linked with the growing demands on Governments to contribute to the operation of environmental conventions and to mechanisms such as the Global Environment Facility (GEF).

42. A number of representatives welcomed the intention of the Executive Director to implement the recommendations of the report of the Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) by the end of 1998.

43. The representative of the United States announced that her country hoped to inject an additional $1 million into the Environment Fund for 1998 and planned to provide support for the revitalization of UNEP.

44. On the question of Mercure, the Minister of Environmental Conservation of Kenya reaffirmed that the negotiations between UNEP and his Government had gone a long way to resolving the outstanding technical issues. He hoped that the facility would be commissioned before the assembled participants returned to their home countries at the end of the current meeting.

45. The representative of Cuba, drew attention to paragraph 2 of document UNEP/HLC/2/INF/1/Add.1, which stated that the delay in installation of Mercure facilities in his country was due to customs problems. In fact, the equipment had been in Cuba since long before October 1997 and had not become operational because the technicians responsible for its installation had not come to the country to certify its operator. Cuban technicians would carry out the installation in March and required technical certification from project managers in UNEP. The delays were the responsibility of that party, not of Cuba.

46. At the closing session of the meeting, on 4 March 1998, the Minister of Environmental Conservation of Kenya announced that the outstanding technical issues relating to the Nairobi Mercure facility had been resolved and operations could now begin. It had been agreed that the use of the facility would be confined to the transmission of data. Kenya was willing to enter into negotiations on voice transmission and inter-connections with other United Nations agencies in Nairobi, but the proposal from the Executive Director to that effect had come on 28 February, when the negotiations were

almost completed. His Government was committed to strengthening UNEP and the entire United Nations location at Nairobi and was therefore always ready to provide an enabling environment to that end. He was sure that Mercure would contribute to that common objective.

47. In response, the Executive Director expressed his pleasure at the announcement, given the common aim of stabilizing the United Nations location in Nairobi and integrating it fully into the United Nations system. He hoped that very soon voice transmission and inter-connections with other agencies would be included in the system to demonstrate that this United Nations location was indeed an integrated member of the system. Expressing his gratitude to the donors for their large investment in the Mercure system, he said that more donors might be needed in the future in order to make the most out of the facility.

48. One representative, speaking on behalf of the States members of a regional economic integration organization, expressed deep satisfaction at the conclusion of the agreement on the Mercure facility and said that he assumed that the financial implications of the operation would be considered by the authorities in UNEP. He welcomed the fact that the possibility of extending the facility to include voice transmission and inter-connections with other agencies was to be investigated, as it was the only way that the United Nations organizations based in Nairobi could benefit from immediate links with other agencies and countries. He looked forward to a proposal on the subject from the Executive Director, as well as an expansion of the family of donors to the project.

49. Another representative announced that her Government would be preparing a paper on monitoring and assessment as part of the core functions of UNEP, which would be circulated to all interested delegations.

50. In conclusion, the Executive Director noted that there was now a need to prove that Mercure was compatible with the overall United Nations telecommunications system, a matter that had been raised in the 1997 OIOS report on the review of the United Nations Environment Programme and the administrative practices of its secretariat, including the United Nations Office at Nairobi. He hoped that he would be able to convince United Nations Headquarters that the system was indeed the right one.

51. At the fourth session of the meeting, on 4 March, the Committee adopted its conclusions under this item on the basis of a draft (UNEP/HLC/2/L.2) prepared by the small working group established under the chairmanship of the Rapporteur (see para. 27 above). The conclusions as adopted by the Committee are contained in paragraphs 2 to 9 of annex I below.

V. UNEP REFORM AND REVITALIZATION IN THE CONTEXT OF UNITED NATIONS REFORM

52. Introducing agenda item 5 at the 2nd session of the meeting, the Executive Director said that the issue of reform of UNEP had two essential aspects: first, reorganization of the headquarters at Nairobi, and, second, the integration of UNEP reform in overall reform of the United Nations. With regard to the first aspect, he drew attention to the possible synergies that could be derived from the Nairobi location and suggested that the problem of

low critical mass in individual institutions could be overcome by pooling resources of the different organizations. At the same time he drew attention to the need to avoid overlapping and duplication between UNCHS (Habitat) and UNEP, on the one hand, and UNON, on the other.

53. With regard to the integration of UNEP reform in the system-wide reform process, he noted that the post-Rio success of UNEP in developing conventions and secretariats, coupled with the greening of other agencies, such as United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the World Bank, had had the downside of leading to the segmentation and fragmentation of environmental policy, and diverting funds from UNEP.

54. Following the General Assembly's endorsement of the Secretary-General's reform package, at its fifty-second session, the Secretary-General had set up a task force, under the chairmanship of Mr. Töpfer to further clarify the position of environmental policy within the United Nations system. Mr. Töpfer circulated to the Committee the terms of reference for the task force whose membership would be to gather knowledge from inside and outside the system. That work was to be finalized by 15 June 1998, for incorporation of its results into the work of the fifty-third session of the General Assembly. Among other inputs to the reform process, he mentioned, in particular, the evaluations on the management and administrative support costs (MASC) budget and the regional offices mandated by the Governing Council at its nineteenth session, work on which had already been commenced by the Committee of Permanent Representatives, and the OIOS report and recommendations.

55. In the ensuing debate, many representatives stressed the need to strengthen the role of UNEP as coordinator and catalyst of environmental work. In particular, in the area of the development of environmental law and programmes, UNEP was seen to have a key role in developing links and ensuring consistency of approach between the various convention secretariats. To that end, it required increased financial resources and strengthened mechanisms. It was noted that the environment was coming to the centre of work of many United Nations agencies, which was in itself a good thing, but had the downside of fragmenting environmental activities. Many representatives therefore stressed the need to strengthen the role of UNEP, on the basis of the Nairobi Declaration and the recommendations of the nineteenth special session of the General Assembly, to ensure that UNEP was the main body dealing with environment in the United Nations system. Many representatives also underlined the importance of the Task Force established by the Secretary-General, one describing it as the key to the reform process, and welcomed the fact that it would be chaired by the Executive Director.

56. Specific proposals on the subject were submitted by the Bureau, the Group of Latin American and Caribbean Countries, the Group of 77 and China, the United States of America, and the European Union, which were either fully supported or generally welcomed by all representatives who referred to them in their statements.

57. Several representatives drew attention to the proposal from the Bureau on the transformation of UNEP into a specialized agency. The proposal was believed to have strong points both for and against, and, in the opinion of one representative, merited further study, while another representative did

not support the proposal, as transformation into a specialized agency would cost time and money, lead to reduced membership and loss of financial stature, as well as jeopardizing the catalytic function of UNEP. Another representative, while welcoming the proposal, stressed the need first to stabilize UNEP before moving on to more ambitious goals.

58. A number of representatives stressed the need to strengthen the UNEP regional offices and further to decentralize its work: that effort, they felt, would lead to a further strengthening of headquarters. One representative, speaking on behalf a group of countries, stressed the usefulness of regional ministerial meetings on the environment and suggested the formation of regional environmental councils; another representative, speaking on behalf of the member States of a regional economic integration organization, felt that regional ministerial meetings should not duplicate existing arrangements.

59. A number of representatives also stressed the linkage between the reform process and the need for adequate and predictable funding for UNEP.

60. A number of representatives agreed that UNEP must reprioritize its activities. Among issues to which priority should be given, the following were mentioned: freshwater; chemicals; the strengthened presence of UNEP in GEF; a strengthen role in discussions on economic instruments; environmental monitoring, analysis and reporting; and sustainable consumption patterns. Two representatives, one speaking on behalf of the member States of a regional economic integration organization, mentioned the need to strengthen UNEP's role in analysis, necessitating an enhanced telecommunications capacity and, therefore, prompt implementation of the Mercure agreement.

61. One representative, stating the reform process must focus on, inter alia, improving the structure of UNEP's governing bodies, suggested the establishment of a Scientific and Technical Advisory Committee, with experts chosen from the relevant field and with equitable geographical representation, to provide scientific input to the political process.

62. Another representative suggested that UNEP should have a policing and enforcement capacity to ensure compliance with international environmental norms, particularly with regard to the transboundary effects of activities within a country.

63. Some representatives drew attention to other inputs to the reform process, such as the Economic and Social Council, the Commission on Sustainable Development, the Committee of Permanent Representatives, the secretariat and the task force set up by the Secretary-General and chaired by the Executive Director. One representative said that, while it endorsed the task force, it remained the responsibility of Governments to reshape UNEP work in the light of the recommendations of the special session, and it was therefore essential to energize the role of the Committee to give recommendations on reform. Since the Committee could not be expected at its current meeting to come up with specific recommendations, the same representative proposed that ideas could be developed through a process of informal consultations, over the telephone, fax and Internet, involving not

just members of the Committee but also other countries and non-governmental organizations with useful experience. Different countries could tackle different issues and work towards a synthesis of ideas.

64. In particular, one representative, speaking on behalf the member States of a regional economic integration organization, expressed support for the Secretary-General's Track II approach to reform and suggested that it was beyond the remit of the Governing Council to discuss the role of GEF; instead, it should confine itself to reviewing the role of GEF as an implementing agency and its relationship with the Governing Council.

65. The representative of Uganda, speaking in his capacity as Chairman of the Committee of Permanent Representatives, drew attention to the management efficiency evaluation being undertaken by the Committee of Permanent Representatives and the secretariat in accordance with Governing Council decision 19/22. That exercise, which was already fully under way, would represent an important contribution to the reform process and, he hoped, would go a long way to complement the discussion on the reform process in the High-level Committee of Ministers and Officials. The Committee of Permanent Representatives was ready to work with the Executive Director and looked forward to his involvement in the exercise. The Committee of Permanent Representatives would also be pleased to receive comments from the High-level Committee of Ministers and Officials so that the evaluation might produce the results expected.

66. At the fourth session of the meeting, on 4 March, the Committee adopted its conclusions under this item on the basis of a draft (UNEP/HLC/2/L.2/Add.1) prepared by the small working group established under the chairmanship of the Rapporteur (see para. 27 above). The conclusions as adopted by the Committee are contained in paragraphs 10 to 13 of annex I below).

VI. FRESHWATER

67. Introducing agenda item 6 at the 3rd session of the meeting, the Executive Director remarked that freshwater was now the most important issue on the international agenda and had been accorded priority in the inter-sessional meeting of the Commission on Sustainable Development. He listed a number of important recent and forthcoming conferences on the issue of freshwater and noted that the matter was dealt with in a differentiated matter by various agencies in the United Nations system. In view of the resulting fragmentation of efforts, it was essential that UNEP should work towards strengthened integration in its approach to freshwater.

68. All those who took the floor concurred in the crucial importance of the issue of freshwater, in its links to human health, sustainable development and ecosystem conservation. Some representatives pointed out the political ramifications of certain freshwater problems, such as the conflicts arising between users of shared freshwater resources, and stressed that UNEP should confine itself to the environmental aspects of the issue, in particular, the quality and quantity of freshwater resources and the provision of policy guidance and scientific advice, and not get bogged down in political or

economic aspects of the issue, more appropriately dealt with by other agencies. Overall coordination should be left to the Commission on Sustainable Development and its subsidiary bodies.

69. One representative said that the term "shared water resources" in the documentation submitted by the secretariat should be replaced with the term "transboundary water resources", which more fully reflected the dynamics of the hydrological cycle and the fact the possibility of States sharing waters in a fixed proportion of what was in the river at any given time was applicable only to rivers marking political boundaries.

70. The representative of Australia introduced a background paper submitted by his delegation and circulated by the secretariat. Australia had also drafted a decision on the issue and would circulate it between the current meeting and the forthcoming session of the Governing Council. Prominent among the reasons prompting Australia to prepare its freshwater initiative had been to ensure that UNEP played a significant role in promoting the freshwater agenda considered by the Commission on Sustainable Development. Key to that endeavour would be the preparation, through cooperation between the Executive Director and Governments, of a set of relevant projects, some of which were suggested in the background paper. He outlined a proposed collaborative approach between the secretariat and Governments, leading to the preparation of a policy paper for submission to Governments. That approach would ensure the positive involvements of Governments in UNEP policy development work and give UNEP the authoritative mandate called for in the Nairobi declaration. If the model proved workable, it could then be extended to other aspects of the work of UNEP.

71. One representative said that institutions or centres responsible for the sustainable management and the assessment of freshwater should be established in all countries, by the year 2002 at the latest. Such institutions could form networks, at regional and international levels for the implementation of sustainable development strategies. By promoting that initiative, which would have a significant multiplier effect, UNEP would be fulfilling its catalytic function. In addition, he suggested that UNEP should take the lead in promoting an international agreement on water and pointed out that none of the existing international environmental instruments dealt with the vital issue of the sustainable provision of water. There was no international law on water per se and a convention on the issue could lead to the mobilization of financial resources for work in that area.

72. Among other aspects of the freshwater issue to which representatives drew attention were the need for adequate capacity-building, technology transfer, the need for greater financial resources for water and pollution and for countries to mobilize both their own resources and foreign investment, financial mechanisms, public-awareness building, and strengthened international cooperation in the area of freshwater management; the need for developed countries to reduce their freshwater consumption to sustainable levels; and for account to be taken of the particular circumstances of individual countries, in particular the developing countries. One representative also suggested that UNEP should assist in the mobilization of funding for freshwater activities and that eligibility for GEF assistance should be extended to include catchment areas and not be confined to international waters.

73. One representative, while expressing his appreciation to the efforts of the World Bank and the Global Environment Facility in the management of Lake Victoria, said that, to date, no concrete measures had been taken to remove the water hyacinth covering the lake. He therefore called on UNEP to start an emergency programme to look into the problem.

74. Several representatives stressed that water quantity should not overshadow the need for water quality, some of them stating that any discussion on freshwater must be led by concerns about pollution.

75. One representative said that any discussion of water within UNEP must acknowledge that oceans and marine ecosystems deserved undivided attention at the same time, since any decision on freshwater also affected the oceans.

76. Some representatives pointed to the need for involvement of all stakeholders in freshwater management. One representative, however, cautioned that that need had to be balanced with the need to implement a catchment-area-based integrated policy that had a long-term vision.

77. Attention was drawn to various recent and forthcoming meetings on the issue of freshwater, in particular, the Expert Workshop on Strategic Approaches to Freshwater Management, held in Harare in January 1998, the upcoming International Dialogue Forum, "Global Water Politics: Cooperation for Transboundary Water Management", held in Bonn, Germany, from 3 to 5 March 1998, and the International Conference on Water and Sustainable Development, to be held in Paris from 19 to 21 March 1998, and to the ongoing debate on the issue in such bodies as the Administrative Committee on Coordination Subcommittee on Water Resources and the Commission on Sustainable Development, in which UNEP should play an active role. One representative stressed, however, that UNEP should not prejudge the outcome of the sixth session of the Commission and expressed the view that references to implementation and reporting functions should be avoided.

78. One representative, speaking on behalf of the member States of a regional economic integration organization, drew attention to the success of the UNEP regional seas programme and suggested that the Executive Director could develop proposals on freshwater management based on the successful experience of that programme.

79. Various approaches to the problem were suggested. One representative, speaking on behalf of a group of countries, welcomed the prominence accorded to the issue, thus forging a link between freshwater and sustainable development that previously had not been sufficiently strong, and stressed the need to give priority to programmes and policies to tackle in an integrated way the management of freshwater resources. Another representative, speaking on behalf of the member States of a regional economic integration organization, outlined a procedure ensuring the appropriate involvement of other United Nations agencies and institutions in the development of a strategic approach to freshwater. In the same context, one representative suggested that, given the fragmented structure of United Nations activities on freshwater, UNEP should be given the responsibility for coordinating multisectoral efforts. Another representative believed that the issue necessitated a more global and holistic approach, incorporating

recommendations of the Commission on Sustainable Development and section D of the programme for the further implementation of Agenda 21, adopted by the special session of the General Assembly.

80. One representative felt, in view of the importance of the issue, that the Committee should prepare, as one of its outputs, a separate document on freshwater, which should incorporate two elements: first, that the work of the Committee was only a link in a chain, leading through the Governing Council to the Commission on Sustainable Development, and, second, since freshwater was not always under the jurisdiction of environmental ministries, that Governments should be encouraged to reunite the freshwater sector. By taking that initiative, UNEP would be fulfilling the leadership role it was called on to play in the Nairobi Declaration.

81. The representative of Germany announced that his Government was contributing DM 750,000 for various activities, including freshwater-related activities.

82. Following the discussion, the Committee heard statements from the representatives of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), World Meteorological Organization (WMO) and the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs.

83. The representative of UNESCO said that his organization's activities related to freshwater dated back to the 1950s and were widened in 1965 with the International Hydrological Decade, following which the International Hydrological Programme (IHP), now in its fifth phase, had been launched. The main outputs of the IHP had been more than 260 studies, reports and technical documents representing scientific progress in the knowledge of hydrological processes world-wide. Other outputs included methodological guidebooks for the assessment and management of water resources in different regions and under different conditions. In all its activities, UNESCO cooperated closely with regional organizations and other members of the United Nations system. There had been, in particular, excellent cooperation with UNEP, which UNESCO hoped would continue for the benefit of all Member States. UNESCO believed that the very important individual efforts by different entities of the United Nations system must become part of a United Nations system-wide effort to be coordinated by the ACC Subcommittee on Water Resources, which had proved its useful role, in particular with the production of the Comprehensive Assessment of Freshwater Resources of the World. Within its competence of science, education and culture, UNESCO was eager to offer its cooperation with UNEP in the best interests of the Member States.

84. The representative of WMO said that his organization was involved in hydrological activities, as interrelated with climatology and meteorology, which, inter alia, helped provide forecasts of the quantity and quality of water resources. The Comprehensive Assessment of the Fresh Water Resources of the World, in which WMO had participated, was a good example of such cooperation. Stressing the unsustainability of the current situation with regard to water resources in the world and the need for timely data, he said that it was disappointing that the data-collection system in many areas was inadequate. He therefore welcomed the chance to participate in the discussion. WMO had worked closely with UNEP in the past, including with GEMS/Water, and that collaboration had been based on mutual respect for the

responsibilities of the two bodies. He looked forward to UNEP playing a role among the agencies represented on the ACC Subcommittee on Water Resources and to working with UNEP to provide effective support to Member States.

85. The representative of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, speaking on behalf of the secretariat of the Commission on Sustainable Development, highlighted the importance of the role of UNEP in the environmental aspects of freshwater resources. Noting the timeliness of the current debate, since the Commission on Sustainable Development was to address the issue at its forthcoming session, he drew attention to the recommendations of the Inter-Sessional Working Group on Freshwater Resources, by which the United Nations system would be invited to elaborate in 2000 an international implementation programme for freshwater. The Working Group had also emphasized the importance of UNEP's contribution to the work of the Commission and the need to make use of the full potential of GEMS for that purpose.

86. At the fourth session of the meeting, on 4 March, the Committee adopted its conclusions under this item on the basis of a draft (UNEP/HLC/2/L.2/Add.2) prepared by the small working group established under the chairmanship of the Rapporteur (see para. 27 above). The conclusions as adopted by the Committee are contained in paragraphs 14 to 21 of annex I below.

VII. RULES OF PROCEDURE OF THE HIGH-LEVEL COMMITTEE OF MINISTERS AND OFFICIALS

87. Introducing agenda item 7 at the third session of the meeting, on 3 March 1998, the Deputy Executive Director said that, in its decision 19/32, the Governing Council had decided that, save as otherwise provided for in that decision, the rules of procedure of the Council should apply, mutatis mutandis, to the High-level Committee of Ministers and Officials until it adopted its own rules of procedure. At its meeting in August, the Bureau had identified three major requirements for the conduct of the Committee's meetings: efficient time management, facilitation of the debate and reinforcement of regional representation. Drawing attention to the note by the Secretariat on the subject (UNEP/HLC/2/INF/2 and Corr.1) he suggested that it might be appropriate to gain experience with the current arrangements and, if it was found that they did not meet those requirements, to introduce the necessary changes at a later date. He therefore suggested that, for the current meeting, the rules of procedure of the Governing Council should continue to apply mutatis mutandis to the work of the Committee.

88. In the ensuing discussion some representatives expressed support for the note by the secretariat, stating that the proceedings of the current session had shown that the current arrangements were satisfactory and that therefore there was no need to change them. One representative said that there was no sense in expending time and resources on a redrafting of the rules of procedure at the current stage, especially in light of the fact that the Governing Council would review the governing structure of UNEP at its twenty-first session. Other representatives were of the view that, while the rules of procedure of the Governing Council had worked well for the current

meeting, such an arrangement could only be a temporary solution and the High-level Committee would eventually require its own rules of procedure tailored for its unique functions.

89. At the fourth session of the meeting, on 4 March, the Committee adopted its conclusions under this item on the basis of a draft (UNEP/HLC/2/L.2/Add.3) prepared by the small working group established under the chairmanship of the Rapporteur (see para. 27 above). The conclusions as adopted by the Committee are contained in paragraph 22 of annex I below.

VIII. OTHER MATTERS

90. At the closing (4th) session of the meeting, on 4 March, the Chairman announced that the dates of next meeting of the High-level Committee of Ministers and Officials would be decided upon by the Bureau at a meeting to be held on 28 April 1998, in conjunction with the sixth session of the Commission on Sustainable Development.

IX. CLOSURE OF THE SESSION

91. After the customary exchange of courtesies, the Chairman declared the second meeting of the High-level Committee of Ministers and Officials closed at 4.10 p.m. on Wednesday, 4 March 1998.

Annex I

CONCLUSIONS OF THE HIGH-LEVEL COMMITTEE OF MINISTERS AND OFFICIALS

AGENDA ITEM 3: STATUS OF THE TRUST FUNDS IN SUPPORT OF THE WORK OF THE HIGH-LEVEL COMMITTEE OF MINISTERS AND OFFICIALS

1. The High-level Committee of Ministers and Officials received the report on the status of trust funds and, while referring to the implementation of Governing Council decision 19/32, thanked all Governments which had made available resources to facilitate the work of the Committee. The Committee appreciated especially the announcement by Argentina that her country would contribute $5,000 to the General Trust Fund in 1998.

AGENDA ITEM 4: ADEQUATE, GROWING AND PREDICTABLE FUNDING OF UNEP, AND PROGRESS REPORT ON THE MERCURE TELECOMMUNICATION SYSTEM

2. The Committee welcomed the Executive Director's comprehensive report on the critical funding situation of UNEP and noted.

(a) That financial contributions to the Environment Fund had declined since 1992 by one third;

(b) That there had been significant shortfalls between approved budgets and the contributions actually received;

(c) That those shortfalls had prevented approved work programmes from being fully implemented;

(d) That the approved work programme and budget for the biennium 1998-1999 could not be implemented as approved by the Governing Council unless contributions increased by 50 per cent over current levels;

(e) That the shift to earmarked contributions, while providing significant financial support, was jeopardizing the ability of UNEP to implement the priorities set out in the Nairobi Declaration;

(f) That the drastic decline in recent years of Environment Fund balances was threatening the capability of UNEP to enter into financial commitments, especially at the beginning of the year.

3. The Committee concluded that adequate and predictable funding was essential if UNEP was to fulfil its role at the heart of United Nations environmental activities. The Committee welcomed the Executive Director's efforts to reduce the operating costs of UNEP by streamlining the secretariat and increasing its efficiency, which would help in attracting increased contributions for financing UNEP activities.

4. There was an urgent need to relate work programmes and budgets to realistic expectations for funds. The Executive Director expressed the hope that Member States should set themselves the objective of improving the funding of UNEP and of bringing the level of funding for the Environment Fund back to that of 1992, and that progress towards that goal would be visible before the special session of the Governing Council. Some delegations supported this statement. Statements by some Governments indicating enhanced contributions were appreciated.

5. The predictability of funding might be improved by discussing agreed, negotiated and voluntary contributions. While many delegations expressed reservations with regard to assessed contributions, there was consensus that there was a need to increase the level of commitment. In that context, the Committee considered that Governments should respect that their pledges made were commitments to be honoured and that Governments should pay their contributions as early in the year as possible. There was a need for an early warning mechanism to alert the High-level Committee of Ministers and Officials and the Committee of Permanent Representatives to possible shortfalls.

6. The Committee recommended that the fund reserve should be fully funded.

7. By the end of 1998, the recommendations of the OIOS report should be fully implemented with a view to providing Governments with a complete financial report. The full details of the financial situation of UNEP and the level of contributions in cash and kind should be available on a regular basis. UNEP should also prepare a full and transparent programme, with cost implications, to strengthen managerial efficiency.

8. The Committee noted that funding was provided mainly by a few member countries from three member regions. It considered that all Governments which had not yet contributed according to their financial capabilities should endeavour to do so at an early date. UNEP should also identify and develop new sources of additional finance, including from the private sector.

9. The Committee was of the view that measures should be taken to ensure that trust funds, earmarked contributions and counterpart funds in cash and in kind can lead to increasing the financial resources of UNEP without undermining the integrity and coherence of its global programme. It requested the Executive Director to prepare proposals in that regard for consideration by the Governing Council.

AGENDA ITEM 5: UNEP REFORM AND REVITALIZATION IN THE CONTEXT OF UNITED NATIONS REFORM

10. The Committee took note of the statement by the Executive Director in which he:

(a) Underlined that environmental crises throughout the world threatened not only global and regional ecosystems, but also the base for human life and world peace and security in many regions. It was his opinion that the United Nations, with UNEP in the lead, must develop an effective capacity to respond to environmental threats and disasters, like the forest

fires in South East Asia, the catastrophic floods that occurred in various parts of the world or the serious consequences of El Nino, and like events, not only with short-term disaster-mitigating measures, but also with preventative measures, such as early-warning systems, by the international community. He also insisted on the necessity of strengthening the relationship between multilateral environmental and multilateral trade agreements;

(b) Described the reform process as having two distinct but related parts: first, improvement of the efficient functioning of UNEP itself, as well as other United Nations entities in Nairobi, such as the United Nations Office at Nairobi, and second, review of UNEP's role and mandate on environmental issues in relation to other entities in the UN system through the Task Force established by the Secretary-General. He invited Governments to contribute to his work in both regards.

A. UNEP reform

11. The Committee noted the consensus on the directions for UNEP reform among members and endorsed the Nairobi Declaration as the basis for the reform process. Individual proposals also suggested a variety of visions for how UNEP might be restructured, and for the process of reform itself. Written proposals were submitted by the Bureau of the Committee, GRULAC, the Group of 77 and China, the United States of America and the European Union and are appended to the present conclusions.

12. The Committee supported the Executive Director in his efforts to strengthen UNEP and to ensure that it could serve as the leading global environmental authority and be a catalyst and information resource for the global environmental agenda. UNEP reform should result in, inter alia, an improved analytic, information dissemination and policy capacity which enabled UNEP to respond to the global environmental challenges. There was a need for improvement and streamlining of UNON in order to enhance its capacity to serve UNEP and UNCHS (Habitat). The management efficiency evaluation being carried out by the Secretariat and the Committee of Permanent Representatives should help in achieving these objectives. The Committee considered regionalization and decentralization should be strengthened through the increased involvement and participation of regional ministerial and other relevant forums in the United Nations Environment Programme process, led and coordinated by the Programme's headquarters in Nairobi.

B. UNEP within the context of United Nations reform

13. The Committee welcomed the Secretary-General's decision to establish a task force under the leadership of the Executive Director to prepare proposals on reforming and strengthening United Nations activities in the environment and human-settlement fields. It expressed full confidence in the Executive Director's ability to guide the task force to a successful fulfilment of its task. The conclusions of the Task Force should identify the means to improve United Nations coordination in the field of the environment. A number of delegations indicated their intent to support the

request of the Executive Director for Government input into the work of the Task Force. It noted that several issues needed special attention from the Task Force or the Governing Council. These include:

(a) The need to better coordinate environmental activities in various parts of the United Nations system as well as the need to give these activities a more visible role in the United Nations structure;

(b) The need for the development of coherent interlinkages among multilateral environmental conventions and protocols, including the need to increase synergies in the work of their Conferences of the Parties, as well as to promote closer working interrelationships among the Secretariats;

(c) The need to enhance UNEP's role as an implementing agency of GEF;

(d) The need to advance the implementation of agreed international norms and policies and to foster compliance.

AGENDA ITEM 6: FRESHWATER

14. The Committee noted that freshwater would be an overriding issue of global significance. Sound environmental management and development of freshwater resources, as well as efforts to address water quality issues, were a key to sustainable development, especially in water-poor countries.

A. Role of UNEP in the freshwater agenda

15. The Committee agreed that UNEP should play a vital role in giving substantive environmental input in freshwater issues, in particular, at regional and subregional levels, including those being developed by CSD. The Committee also noted the background paper of Australia, which identified the environmental aspects of integrated water resource management and use as an area in which UNEP could produce concrete results and outputs.

16. The Committee took note of the report of the Executive Director and acknowledged the wide ranging focus of international organizations and the extensive consideration and recommendations given to freshwater activities through international meetings in 1998, including the Harare experts group, Bonn round table and Paris conference.

B. Specific UNEP freshwater activities

17. A number of possible areas for UNEP work on freshwater were discussed, including access to safe drinking water, sanitation, food production, agricultural irrigation, industrial development, community participation approaches, the preservation of ecosystems, integrated water management, cooperation on transboundary water issues, in particular, assisting developing countries in developing their abilities to manage their water resources and developing tools for monitoring and analysis of water quality and quantity, technology transfer and institutional strengthening. The need for increased government involvement in UNEP freshwater work was also discussed. Various written proposals were submitted and are annexed to this report.

18. The Committee requested the Executive Director further to develop proposals for the consideration by the Governing Council on an enhanced future UNEP work programme on environmental aspects of freshwater management based on discussions in the High-level Committee of Ministers and Officials and to advise the Commission on Sustainable Development of the intention that UNEP should make a substantial contribution to environmental aspects of the work of the Commission on strategic approaches to freshwater management and conservation.

19. Citing considerable expertise to offer in this area, many Governments recommended that UNEP should make more use of their expertise in its water-related work. Some Governments also felt that UNEP should facilitate non-conventional partnerships as well, examples including industry and global and regional conventions.

20. The Committee expressed its appreciation for the contribution by Germany of DM 750,000 for different activities, including freshwater-related activities.

21. The Committee considered that there was a need to help developing countries and countries with economies in transition to establish the means of collecting, interpreting and disseminating the information that they needed for water-management decisions. It also considered that there was a need for careful consideration of the links between the work of UNEP, national Governments, bilateral donors and other United Nations agencies and programmes and international institutions.

AGENDA ITEM 7: RULES OF PROCEDURE OF THE HIGH-LEVEL COMMITTEE OF MINISTERS AND OFFICIALS

22. Some members of the High-level Committee of Ministers and Officials were of the view that the rules of procedure of the Governing Council had been proved satisfactory in conducting the business of the High-level Committee of Ministers and Officials at its second session and, therefore, there was no immediate need to develop its own rules of procedure. Other members of the Committee were of the view that, while the rules of procedure of the Governing Council could be used as a transitional measure, the High-level Committee of Ministers and Officials required its own rules of procedure tailored for its unique functions. There was another view that, since the governing structure of the United Nations Environment Programme would be reviewed by the Governing Council at its twenty-first session in accordance with its decision 19/32, the elaboration of the new rules of procedure might not be warranted at the current stage.

Appendix

WRITTEN PROPOSALS SUBMITTED UNDER AGENDA ITEM 5

I. ELEMENTS FOR A DRAFT RESOLUTION OF THE GOVERNING COUNCIL OF THE UNITED NATIONS ENVIRONMENT PROGRAMME CONCERNING THE ROLE OF THE UNITED NATIONS ENVIRONMENT PROGRAMME WITHIN THE CONTEXT OF REFORM OF THE UNITED NATIONS

Proposal by the Bureau

The Governing Council,

Recalling that the Programme for the Further Implementation of Agenda 21, adopted by the General Assembly at its nineteenth special session (General Assembly resolution S-19/2, annex), affirms that the role of the United Nations Environment Programme as the principal United Nations body in the field of environment should be further enhanced,

Recalling also the report of the Secretary-General of 14 July 1997 entitled "Renewing the United Nations: a programme for reform" (A/51/950), and, in particular, its chapter V, section D, on environment, habitat and sustainable development, and General Assembly resolution 52/12 of 12 November 1997,

Further recalling the Nairobi Declaration on the Role and Mandate of the United Nations Environment Programme adopted by the Governing Council in its decision 19/1 of 7 February 1997,

Concerned by the fragmentation of environmental authority across the United Nations system,

Convinced of the need to improve the consistency among the activities within the United Nations system by strengthening the environmental net by means of an increase in service efficiency, political coherence and operational synergies,

Seeking to reinforce the position of the United Nations Environment Programme within the United Nations system through stronger political support and a better legal, institutional and financial basis,

Requests the Secretary-General and the General Assembly to take into account, when considering and elaborating new means for strengthening and reconstructing the United Nations Environment Programme, the following policy elements:

(a) Reinforcement of the position of the United Nations Environment Programme:

(i) The United Nations Environment Programme should be transformed into a global environmental organization, whose name could be the United Nations Environment Organization, with the status of a United Nations specialized agency;

(ii) The Governing Council should be transformed into a universal governing body, seconded by a High-level Committee of Ministers and Officials with representatives of all regional groups;

(iii) The Executive Director's position should become that of Director-General and be a member of the senior management board of the United Nations;

(iv) The Executive Director should be fully empowered to implement any measures decided upon by the Governing Council regarding the organization and staffing to carry out the renewed mandate of the organization;

(b) Enhancement of consistency:

(i) The position of the United Nations Environment Programme as the leading global environmental authority has to be confirmed and fully implemented by the necessary organizational and legal decisions within the United Nations system;

(ii) The United Nations Environment Programme, as the focal point for all environmental activities within the United Nations system, should be consulted about all environmental activities throughout the United Nations bodies;

(iii) The United Nations Environment Programme should participate in the elaboration of strategies within the United Nations system in order to ensure their compatibility with environmental policies in the overall context of sustainable development;

(iv) The United Nations Environment Programme should be the leading authority for supervising the secretariats of the multilateral environmental agreements, such as the Basel Convention on the Control of Transboundary Movement of Hazardous Wastes and Their Disposal, the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, the Convention on Biological Diversity, the Vienna Convention for the Protection of the Ozone Layer and the Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer, and future international environmental agreements;

(c) Capacity and efficiency. A new financing system that ensures adequate and predictable financing of the United Nations Environment Programme should be elaborated. Part of that system could be:

(i) Improvement of efficiency through concentration and coordination of tasks;

(ii) Increase in the contribution to the United Nations Environment Programme from the United Nations regular budget;

(iii) Introduction of assessed contributions from the Member States to cover the core budget;

(iv) Pledges for voluntary contributions.

II. SUGGESTIONS OF THE GROUP OF 77 AND CHINA NAIROBI CHAPTER ON THE AGENDA ITEM RELATING TO REFORM AND REVITALIZATION OF UNEP

A. Basis for action

1. The following decisions/documents constitute basis for actions by the UNEP secretariat, United Nations agencies and Governments on the reform and revitalization of UNEP:

(i) The Nairobi Declaration on the Role and Mandate of the United Nations Environment Programme adopted by the UNEP Governing Council at its nineteenth session (February-April 1997), vide decision 19/1;

(ii) Decision 19/32 entitled "Governance of the United Nations Environment Programme" adopted by UNEP Governing Council at its nineteenth session (February-April, 1997);

(iii) Decisions adopted by UNEP Governing Council, especially decisions 19/22 (sections II and III) and 19/29 B, calling for various studies/reports to be submitted by UNEP secretariat and the Committee of Permanent Representatives (CPR) on enhancing efficiency of UNEP secretariat and its cooperation and coordination with other United Nations agencies, including secretariats of environmental conventions;

(iv) Paragraphs 123-124 of the document "Programme for the further implementation of Agenda 21" adopted by the special session of the General Assembly - UNGASS (New York, 23-24 June 1998);

(v) Report of the Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS), United Nations Headquarters, on the review of the United Nations Environment Programme and the administrative practices of its secretariat, including the United Nations Office at Nairobi (document A/51/810 dated 27 February 1997);

(vi) Report entitled "Renewing the United Nations: a programme for reform" submitted by the United Nations Secretary-General to the United Nations General Assembly.

B. Main priorities of the process of reform and revitalization of UNEP

2. The following are the main priorities of the process of reform and revitalization of UNEP:

(i) Role and mandate of UNEP;

(ii) Structure and governance of UNEP;

(iii) Adequate, stable and predictable funding of UNEP's work programme and other activities;

(iv) Reform, restructuring and revitalization of UNEP secretariat in Nairobi and regional and functional offices outside Nairobi;

(v) Restructuring of the United Nations Office at Nairobi (UNON);

(vi) Coordination and coherence between UNEP secretariat and UNEP offices outside Nairobi on the one hand and secretariats of environmental conventions and United Nations agencies as well as the World Bank/the International Monetary Fund on the other;

(vii) Reordering of UNEP's activities in accordance with the Nairobi Declaration;

(viii) Regionalization of UNEP's activities within the parameters of its global programme; and

(ix) UNEP's cooperation and coordination with partner organizations, institutions, forums and individuals outside the United Nations system, including international non-governmental organizations.

C. Process of reform and revitalization of UNEP

3. The process of reform and revitalization of UNEP must aim at implementing and operationalizing the Nairobi Declaration on the Role and Mandate of UNEP and the decision of UNEP Governing Council on the Governing Structure of UNEP which were endorsed by UNGASS and the United Nations Secretary-General's reform proposals and which furnish the necessary framework for the reform process. We view the Task Force, set up by the United Nations Secretary-General to formulate proposals for UNEP's reform within the context of reform of United Nations activities relating to the environment and sustainable development, as an appropriate mechanism for articulating reform proposals on the basis of consultations with relevant multilateral bodies, experts and inter-governmental consensus. The designation of Mr. Klaus Töpfer, Executive Director, UNEP/Director-General UNON, as the head of the Task Force is indeed reassuring. The governing bodies of UNEP, namely HLCOMO, the CPR and the Governing Council must contribute meaningfully to the articulation of reform proposals by the Task Force.

4. The reform and revitalization of UNEP can only be achieved through a dynamic and concerted process comprising actions by the Executive Director of UNEP with the wholehearted participation and support of Governments, the United Nations Headquarters and the relevant multilateral agencies, both within and outside the United Nations system. The process will entail actions of an urgent nature to be taken by the Executive Director within a short time perspective as well as medium- and long-term measures requiring approval of other bodies and their governing structures.

D. Suggestions

5. Member States of G-77 and China, in pursuance of their commitment to fully and effectively contribute to the process of reform and restructuring of UNEP and without in any way wishing to micro-manage UNEP, submit a few

suggestions for actions by the Executive Director as well as the comprehensive process of reform and revitalization to be addressed by the Task Force headed by Mr. Töpfer:

(i) Implementation of the Nairobi Declaration on the Role and Mandate of UNEP will inevitably warrant determination of the status of UNEP in the United Nations system, namely, whether it should continue to be a Programme or if it should be transformed into a specialized agency – a global environment organization on the pattern of WHO, WTO with universal membership;

(ii) Implementation of UNEP's Governing Council's decisions on governance will require streamlining of the activities of CPR, HLCOMO and the Governing council with a view to ensuring that they become mutually complementary and together provide effective and timely guidance and support to the Executive Director;

(iii) Improvement of the financial situation of UNEP is an urgent and paramount need and would require positive response by Governments, the United Nations Headquarters and international organizations and other sources of financing. The UNEP secretariat must undertake efforts to project the achievements and potential of UNEP as well as its ability to propose important environmental agenda in a future perspective. Industrialized developed countries must continue to bear the major part of the financial burden and developing countries must contribute on the basis of their ability to pay;

(iv) The organizational structure of the UNEP secretariat and the offices outside Nairobi should be redesigned with a view to effecting systemic and management improvements, including those suggested by OIOS and Governments as well as those necessitated by the priorities set out in the Nairobi Declaration;

(v) An effective mechanism for the early implementation of the recommendations made by OIOS and ACABQ should be set up;

(vi) UNEP's work programme must be re-ordered in conformity with the six broad clusters of activities cited in the Nairobi Declaration and the imperative of regionalization of UNEP's activities. This would require a significant strengthening of UNEP's regional offices, including an enhanced functional involvement by them in UNEP;

(vii) Review and streamlining of the processes of recruitment, promotion and deployment of personnel in conformity with the reordering of UNEP's activities and work programme in accordance with the Nairobi Declaration and with a view to enhancing efficient and performance is an urgent priority;

(viii) UNEP's communications must be strengthened through, inter alia, earliest possible and full operationalization of Mercure and other rapid means of communications;

(ix) UNEP secretariat's capacity to implement the focused mandate of the revitalized UNEP's set out in the Nairobi Declaration must be strengthened. This would require the setting up within the headquarters of a well-resourced division for environment and economics which would, inter alia, be responsible for the Global Environmental Outlook reports and sustainable development issues as well as the establishment of divisions entrusted with development and implementation of international environmental law and supporting institution-building in the developing countries;

(x) A broad-based and geographically balanced scientific advisory panel to advise UNEP on emerging environmental issues and trends and to enable UNEP to serve as the bridge between science and policy with special attention to the needs and priorities of the developing countries may be instituted at an early date;

(xi) Enhancement of UNEP's inter-action with the other United Nations agencies and forums, especially the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), secretariats of environmental conventions and the Commission on Sustainable Development, through the ACC Inter-Agency Committee on Sustainable Development and the earliest possible development of UNEP Inter-Agency Coordination Group (IAEG) aimed at ensuring coordination and coherence of environment-related activities of the United Nations system constitute a major priority;

(xii) In order to promote negotiations on global environmental issues, UNEP should take initiative in hosting or convening environment-related meetings in cooperation and coordination with the relevant bodies, including secretariats of environmental conventions, at the UNEP Headquarters. The value and quality of UNEP's participation in negotiations/meetings sponsored by other organizations and bodies must be enhanced;

(xiii) The GEF Assembly should consider measures to enhance UNEP's role as an implementing agency of GEF;

(xiv) UNEP's offices in Geneva and New York must be enabled to secure enhanced support for UNEP from Government and international agencies located there and achieve increased and improved cooperation and coordination;

(xv) UNEP's ability to secure increased political and financial support of Governments and other stakeholders should be enhanced through, inter alia, more effective servicing of CPR, the HLCOMO and the Governing Council by improving the quality of documentation and ensuring their timely distribution;

(xvi) Increased and improved interaction between the UNEP secretariat and regional inter-governmental organizations, United Nations regional commissions, and other regional forums is needed to make UNEP's activities at the regional level more visible and more meaningful;

(xvii) The policy, programmatic, financial and administrative implications of the proliferation of trust funds, counterpart funds and earmarked contributions must be addressed urgently through, inter alia, a comprehensive dialogue among UNEP secretariat and donor and recipient countries to achieve the twin objectives of augmenting resources for implementing UNEP's global programme and the preservation of the integrity and coherence of the global programme;

(xviii) UNON must be streamlined in line with the United Nations Office at Geneva (UNOG) and the United Nations Office at Vienna (UNOV) with the assistance of United Nations Headquarters;

(xix) The UNEP secretariat must take steps to enhance the efficiency and morale of its personnel, including through ensuring security of tenure, timely promotions, and facilitating institutional learning as well as greater involvement and participation of staff in the planning and management of work.

III. REGIONALIZATION

A proposal by GRULAC (Mexico)

It is proposed to enhance the effectiveness of UNEP by involving all Ministers of the environment through the appropriate regional mechanisms, in the decision-making process of the organization.

To enhance the effectiveness of UNEP means to increase the capability of the organization to produce the results expected of it. The Nairobi Declaration, in its operative paragraph 1, states that UNEP has been and should continue to be the principle UN body in the filed of environment. When expressing this wish, member states were aware that UNEP, because of the increasing number of UN bodies that deal with the environment and because of other circumstantial factors affecting its organization, could lose its membership role in steming would environmental degradation.

To retain this role, the Nairobi Declaration puts forward four lines of action, one of which is "regionalization and decentralization, through the increased involvement and participation of regional ministerial and other relevant forums in the UNEP process" (paragraph 4,b).

This can be effectively done by transforming the relevant regional ministerial forum into a regional governing council of UNEP.

In each regional there is a forum where ministers of the environment meet periodically to deliberate and take action on problems that transcend national borders. In Latin America and the Caribbean, the Ministers of the Environment have been meeting annually for the last 12 years and have developed a mechanism for this purpose The experience gained in these 12 years entitles the Latin American and Caribbean countries to take the lead in transforming UNEP into a genuine world organization through regionalization.

By taking the UNEP decision making process, UNEP can burst forth from the confines of a bi-annual decision making process restricted to Nairobi and became a truly effective world organization.

What are the practical advantages of this course of action?

For UNEP:

a) A greater and more effective world reach by involving all countries in the environmental process.

b) An increased and strengthened decision making process, greater capability of producing a more realistic world environment agenda as well as greater ability in implementing decisions taken at the world and regional levels.

c) Greater access by UNEP to regional, scientific and technical resources through the regional governing council.

d) New regional financial inputs will expand the contribution base and increase predictability of resources.

e) Regional offices will become regional secretariats to the regional governing councils, thus assuring better use of the resources channelled to them by HQ. In this new capacity, the regional offices will play a much more effective role in catering to the region's needs.

For the regions:

a) The regional mechanisms would be linked organically to the UNEP process and would not only participate in UNEP's deliberations on the world environmental agenda but also share direct responsibility in its implementation. By becoming part of UNEP, the regional mechanism, acting as a regional council, would ensure that those parts of the world environmental agenda that pertains to the region will be effectively carried out.

b) By participating in the regional governing council of UNEP, the regional environmental ministers will be simultaneously taking part in a world organization. Their role, politically and technically, in their country, in the regional and internationally will be automatically enhanced. For a minister of the environment this added prominence would translate into greater national awareness for environmental matters which will strengthen the position of his organization in the government.

The implementation of this proposal should not be difficult. The regional mechanism could delegate authority to a small group of members to negotiate UNEP an agreement wherein a division of tasks between UNEP and the region will be drawn and the limits of the authority of the regional governing council as well as its responsibilities as a UN body will be clearly defined. This agreement would then be ratified by the GC and the regional mechanism.

IV. STATEMENT BY THE UNITED STATES TO THE HIGH-LEVEL COMMITTEE OF MINISTERS AND OFFICIALS AT ITS SECOND MEETING

The United States delegation has been impressed by the recognition of the need for reestablishing new partnerships and stronger cooperation - among the member governments, between governments and the Secretariat and between governments and our new Executive Director. The goodwill behind the comments that have been made both formally and informally is something we can build on as we work together in the remaining sessions of this meeting. For my government and probably for others, we believe we have reached a decisive point where we simply must see identifiable measures taken to rescue UNEP - and these measures ultimately are the responsibility of governments. Thus, we believe the conclusions of this meeting should include specific recommendations on how governments - the stockholders of UNEP - can both shape and support UNEP's future work in light of the Nairobi Delegation and the UNGASS decision.

We have been extremely fortunate in our ability to attract someone with the experience and qualifications of Dr. Töpfer, and we wholeheartedly support the critical importance of his work as head of the Task Force that has been established to review UNEP's role in the context of other UN activities. However, we believe that the input of governments familiar with the major hurdles facing UNEP - which Dr. Töpfer has himself sought - will be an important and necessary contribution to such process. Thus, our aim is to energize this new vehicle of ministers and other high-level policy makers to take part in contributing to the inputs that will transform UNEP.

We believe that the work the HLC should undertake on reform is complementary, not competitive with or even parallel to the work Dr. Töpfer will lead in the Task Force. The Task Force will have a short timeframe to develop a broad set of recommendations for the Secretary General. The work we can undertake within the advisory mandate of the HLC, if done quickly, can help to inform that effort. We welcome the G-77 and China paper and find much in common with our views. Key among these is reaffirming the mandate of UNEP in line with the Nairobi Declaration. We believe, however, that some detailed work in key areas is vital to inform the task force of governments' thinking on issues which it will not be able to cover in-depth.

We have circulated a proposal to governments both in an earlier demarche and at this meeting which describes our thinking on possible areas of focus. We believe that there is general agreement that these are the areas most in need of attention in the reform process and are consistent with the views of the Executive Director given his statements at this meeting. These are:

1. Environmental Monitoring, Analysis and Reporting

2. Program Prioritization and Budgeting

3. Linkages of UNEP's work with other UN organizations and entities

4. Public Relations and Outreach

5. Administration and Personnel, and

6. Financial Management

We would like to clarify - in response to some concerns we have heard - that our proposal is in no way intended to establish yet another formal mechanism, or layer of governmental intervention in the UNEP process. Rather, we simply believe that some concrete ideas on key areas need to be put down on paper for consideration by the Task Force and for the reform process internally, something that we will not be able to accomplish within this meeting of the HLC itself. The process for discussing such ideas would be done informally, from our respective offices - via fax, telephone and worldwide web. We will provide, through our representation at UNEP, as well as our web site and e-mail, papers we produce for comment, and input.

Our hope is that governments with expertise and interest in a particular issue would take the lead on formulating ideas for such an area. Other interested governments would be invited to participate in this process. These are not designed to be definitive, formal presentations, but rather a way to collect the best possible ideas for revitalizing UNEP and advancing its essential role as a voice for the environment in the UN processes. We believe that inputs should be not be limited to members of the HLC, but that all members of the Governing Council - as well as others such as NGOs knowledgeable in UNEP's functions and programs - should have the opportunity to offer ideas for the direction of such areas. An initial synthesis would need to be quickly prepared so that it could be shared with the Secretary General's task force. We also believe that this work could well continue in more detail, following the recommendations of the task force, for consideration by the Executive Director and the Governing Council at its meeting in 1999.

The US would itself like to offer to take on the issue of Environmental, Monitoring, Analysis and Reporting, as this is an area where we have already done substantial thinking, and an area that we believe should be the backbone of UNEP's work. Monitoring and Assessment not only can serve a valuable tool for reprioritizing UNEP's work in the future, but is an area where UNEP can add value if it is to support key substantive programs, such as freshwater and chemicals.

Our suggestion would be that other groups might attempt to tackle the other issues that we have described.

We hope that you will agree that we, as ministers and other officials, have an important role to play in supporting Dr. Töpfer's work on the Task Force and on reform more generally.

/...

V. STATEMENT BY MICHAEL MEACHER, UNITED KINGDOM MINISTER FOR THE ENVIRONMENT, TO THE HIGH-LEVEL COMMITTEE OF MINISTERS AND OFFICIALS AT ITS SECOND MEETING, ON BEHALF OF THE EUROPEAN UNION

UNEP reform in the context of United Nations reform

1. Chairman, Executive Director, Your Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen. I am speaking on behalf of Ministers and Heads of Delegations of the European Union.

UNGASS

2. The United Nations General Assembly Special Session clearly set out the role of UNEP as the principal United Nations body in the field of environment. The European Union strongly supports the Special Session's conclusion that the role of UNEP should be further enhanced.

3. UNEP must now take forward its role as the leading environmental authority setting the global environmental agenda, promoting the coherent implementation of the environmental dimension of sustainable development and serving as an authoritative advocate for the global environment both within the UN and in other fora.

Track 11 and Bureau Draft Resolution

4. The European Union has supported the proposals put forward in July 1997 by the Secretary-General on the reform of the United Nations. The issue of the further reform of UNEP must be seen in the context of the wider UN reforms and must not undermine or complicate the development of the Secretary- General's Track II proposals. This meeting offers an excellent opportunity to provide the Secretary-General with constructive input for his task of making recommendations to the 53rd Session of the General Assembly. We welcome the Secretary-General's view that environmental issues and the sustainable development perspective should permeate all activities of the United Nations, and we believe that UNEP has a crucial role to play in this respect. UNEP's role in relation to other UN Agencies and Programmes must be clarified and strengthened. UNEP should also seek as often as possible to find ways of co-operating successfully with other UN bodies. In this regard we note the Secretary-General's proposal to further the links between UNEP and Habitat and the role he has assigned to Dr. Töpfer. There are important and dynamic links between urban and developed centres and the natural environment. Environmental problems will increasingly affect cities in the future. We await the Secretary-General's detailed proposals with interest.

Bureau Draft Resolution

5. The EU notes the draft resolution submitted by the Bureau of the High level Committee as a contribution to the further discussion of UN reform in the environmental field. Our discussions on the draft resolution and other proposals should seek to aid and not preempt the considerations of the Secretary-General or Dr Töpfer, who is entrusted with the task of providing new proposals on strengthening UN activities in the environmental and human settlements areas. The European Union indicates its full support for and

confidence in Dr. Toëpfer. We consider that the High-level Committee should indicate similar support and should not do anything to narrow the scope of his and the Secretary-General's deliberations.

[Trusteeship Council - if raised by others

6. As to the proposal to revive the Trusteeship Council, the European Union is not yet convinced that there is a need for a specific environmental body for the global commons or that this is a practical institutional solution to cover adequately all aspects of sustainable development. However, we have yet to see what the Secretary General has in mind. Given the wide-ranging implications for the UN, existing environmental bodies, and the environment, we consider that this would best be addressed in the context of the proposals Mr. Annan intends to make in the longer term, rather than now in this Committee.]

Nairobi Declaration

7. The European Union fully endorses the Nairobi Declaration and sees it as the key to UNEP's reform. The main issue therefore is how this Declaration is to be implemented. The six elements are all important: analysis of global environmental trends; coordination of the relevant environmental conventions; implementation of existing agreements; coordination of environmental activities within the UN system; greater involvement of civil society and the private sector in UNEP's activities; policy and advisory services by UNEP.

8. Taking these in turn, Mr. Chairman, I have the following comments on behalf of the European Union.

Analysis

9. First, we strongly support the development of UNEP's role as the leading analyst of the state of the global environment and assessor of global and regional environmental trends. We welcomed the Global Environment Outlook report on the state of the world's environment which was published earlier this year. Authoritative, robust and speedy analysis of environmental issues is an essential prerequisite to informed debate. This calls for collaboration with a wide range of organizations drawing on the best scientific and technical advice. In this way emerging environmental problems will be identified promptly, and drawn to the attention of policy makers. A challenging task, but an essential one.

10. UNEP has to work under very difficult conditions - a situation which is made worse by Nairobi's current isolation in terms of a modern telecommunications capability. UNEP will only be able to rise to the challenge set by the Nairobi Declaration if its headquarters here in Nairobi has full access to environmental data from around the world. That requires rapid implementation of the connection to the Mercure system. The present delay in completing the link to what should be the hub of the system in Nairobi is unacceptable and I shall be reverting to that issue in a later statement.

Environmental Law and Conventions

11. UNEP has made and continues to make an important contribution in the development of legally binding international instruments in the field of the environment. UNEP should also work towards developing links and consistency of approach between the various environmental conventions. There is now a wide body of international environmental law, including many global and regional conventions with potentially conflicting aims. As part of its task to further the development of international environmental law, UNEP should make itself available to provide advice on best practice in this area. It should promote the concept of closer working relations amongst the Secretariats of the various environmental conventions, whilst bearing in mind the independent legal status of each of those agreements, and taking care not to duplicate the work of the Secretariats or the COPs of the conventions. The European Union recognizes that the burden of reporting places heavy demands on many Parties, especially on the least developed countries. UNEP should, working with the Secretariats of the various conventions concerned, explore ways in which those burdens might be streamlined and eased. We would be interested to explore how UNEP can most usefully contribute to the coordination of functions arising from the increasing number of international environmental agreements, bearing in mind the independent legal status of each of those agreements and the mandate that has been given to UNEP. This is an issue which we hope Mr. Annan will address in his further reform proposals. Coordination is also the responsibility of States. Our delegations to different fora must give consistent messages and we must all devote more attention to ensuring that they do so. The EU would also like to stress UNEP's role with respect to work on Trade and Environment, and notably, also on the relationship between multilateral environmental agreements and multilateral trade agreements.

Implementation

12. I have said we have a large body of international environmental law, but this is only effective where it is properly implemented. This brings me to the third element of the Nairobi Declaration. UNEP should advance implementation of agreed international norms and policies and monitor and foster compliance with sound environmental principles. This should be done by disseminating targeted information and highlighting good practice for countries to draw on. This will help to provide a surer footing for countries' responses to emerging environmental challenges. It is, however, for the UN Development Programme and other programmes to manage in-country projects. UNEP's role is to give advice not aid.

Coordination in the UN

13. Many of the United Nation's activities have a direct or indirect impact on the environment. UNEP needs to reinvigorate its position as the environmental voice of the United Nations. However, there are many ways of doing this. This means identifying and eliminating overlaps and duplication as well as ensuring that policies are aligned. We expect that the work of Dr Töpfer's Task Force will have a major impact in this area,

14. The European Union could not agree to support the proposals to enhance UNEP's Inter-Agency Environment Coordination Group (IEAG) until we have a much more detailed explanation of what this means in practice and the resource consequences involved. Also we understand that the strategy document is still in draft form. We need to agree a final version before it is presented to a wider audience.

Civil Society

15. The European Union strongly supports UNEP's efforts to include major groups and civil society organizations in its activities, so as to contribute towards public awareness of environmental issues and the global environmental agenda. We would welcome a wider consultative process with these groups and we endorse the inclusion of such organizations in the future sessions of the Governing Council.

Policy and Advice

16. Lastly, the Nairobi Mandate refers to UNEP's task to provide policy and advisory services in key areas of institution-building to Governments and other relevant institutions. UNEP's regional offices should be fully involved in the dissemination of advice elaborated by UNEP's Headquarters. The European Union hopes that UNEP will be able to draw together examples of good practice which can be flexibly applied in many countries.

Other Proposals

17. On the other issues raised in the paper the European Union has the following comments. The paper suggests that the Governing Council might review the overall impact of the Global Environment Facility and the role played by UNEP. In our view this does not mean reviewing the role of the GEF itself, which would go beyond the remit of the Governing Council, and risks conflict with the GEF Governing Council itself. Instead the Governing Council might review the role of UNEP as an implementing agency and thus its relationship with the GEF.

18. The paper also suggests that there should be ministerial fora at a regional level which might report to the Governing Council. This is a matter for each Region to decide for itself, in the light of other developments within the region. Again we need to ensure that these activities are complementary and avoid duplication. There are already processes in hand in the European Union through the Environment Council of Ministers. This Council sets the EU policy which is then promoted in the various environmental fora thus removing the need for further coordination by UNEP. We also have links across the whole European continent, both in the context of EU enlargement and through the UNECE.

Conclusion

19. The European Union is committed to the strengthening and reinvigoration of UNEP, and the practical fulfilment of its core mission as defined by the Nairobi Declaration. This is not an option, but rather a fundamental element in our common pursuit of sustainable development. Only UNEP has the potential to act as the environmental conscience of the United Nations with

responsibility for setting the global environmental agenda. We recognize the scale of the challenge; UNEP now has to act with the support of governments to meet this challenge. The role of the Executive Director is clearly crucial; the European Union has no doubt that Dr. Töpfer is equal to the task. Under his leadership we look forward to significant improvements in UNEP's performance and its standing on the world stage.

Annex II

LIST OF DOCUMENTS BEFORE THE HIGH-LEVEL COMMITTEE OF MINISTERS AND OFFICIALS AT ITS SECOND MEETING

Symbol	Title
UNEP/HLC/2/1 and Corr.1	Provisional agenda
UNEP/HLC/2/1/Add.1	Annotated provisional agenda
UNEP/HLC/2/1/Add.1/Rev.1	Revised annotated provisional agenda
UNEP/HLC/2/2 and Corr.1	UNEP reform in the context of United Nations reform
UNEP/HLC/2/3 and Corr.1	Stable, adequate and predictable financing of the United Nations Environment Programme
UNEP/HLC/2/3/Add.1	Funding needs of the United Nations Environment Programme in the biennium 1998-1996
UNEP/HLC/2/4 and Corr.1	Freshwater strategy of the United Nations Environment Programme, following the special session of the United Nations for the purpose of an overall review and appraisal of the implementation of Agenda 21
UNEP/HLC/2/4/Add.1	Freshwater strategy of the United Nations Environment Programme, following the special session of the United Nations for the purpose of an overall review and appraisal of the implementation of Agenda 21
UNEP/HLC/2/5	UNEP reform in the context of United Nations reform: letter dated 27 February 1998 from the Ambassador of Algeria and Chairman of the Group of 77 and China addressed to the Deputy Assistant Executive Director, Policy, Inter-Agency and External Affairs Division, and Secretary to the Governing Council
UNEP/HLC/2/INF/1 and Corr.1	Status of the Mercure satellite communications system as at 13 October 1997
UNEP/HLC/2/INF/1/Add.1	Status of the Mercure satellite communications system as at 27 February 1998
UNEP/HLC/2/INF/2 and Corr.1	Rules of procedure of the High-level Committee of Ministers and Officials

UNEP/HLC/2/INF/3 and Corr.1	Implications of the outcome of the special session of the General Assembly for the future work of the United Nations Environment Programme
UNEP/HLC/2/INF/4 and Corr.1	Stable, adequate and predictable funding for the United Nations Environment Programme
UNEP/HLC/2/INF/5 and Corr.1	UNEP reform in the context of United Nations reform
UNEP/HLC/2/INF/6 and Corr.1	List of nominees of the High-level Committee of Ministers and Officials
UNEP/HLC/2/INF/7	UNEP reform in the context of United Nations reform: elements for a draft decision of the Governing Council on the United Nations Environment Programme concerning the role of the United nations Environment Programme with the context of reform of the United Nations

---